

A Municipal Convention.

ALD. SHEPPARD PROPOUNDS A BRIGHT IDEA THAT MAY RESULT IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENT.

Ald. Sheppard is to the fore with an excellent idea. Recognizing the fact that the Municipal Act is constantly being tinkered and patched without affording general satisfaction, he proposes that a provincial convention of mayors, wardens and reeves, be held in this city some time next January or February, before or during the session of the Legislature, and that various matters of common interest be talked over, such as exemptions, assessment, school systems, police systems, fire systems, bonus systems, license systems, good roads and general systems of taxation. Mr. Sheppard's idea is that a Provincial Municipal Association be formed, to meet annually, biennially or triennially, with sections representing cities, towns, villages and townships, the same as in the Board of Trade; that papers shall be read at these gatherings, to be subsequently discussed, and that the conclusions arrived at shall be reported to the Local Government. The worthy alderman will probably bring the matter up in Council at an early date and issue invitations to the various mayors, reeves and wardens to attend the first convention in this city. Mr. Sheppard recognizes that a new set of municipal officers will be elected in January and that consequently many of the men in power will be out then, but proposes to bring the subject up at this date by issuing circulars and to renew the invitations to attend when the elections have been decided. In order that the convention shall have the benefit of experience the present incumbents of office will be invited to attend as well as their successors. It is impossible to over-estimate the practical value of such a movement, and it is to be hoped that Alderman Sheppard's proposition will be taken hold of with the unanimity that it merits.

The above is taken from a Toronto exchange and is, no doubt, suggested by the reports of Municipal Conventions in the United States and the success that attended the Municipal Tax Exemption Convention, which met in Toronto during September, 1897. Our recollection of this convention is that the delegates were at a loss for special information or statistics relating to the important question they were supposed to consider, with the result that nothing was accomplished. The Toronto hotels welcomed the contributions of their municipal guests, who were, no doubt, pleased with the trip. The Municipal Act does not provide for the payment of travelling expenses for convention purposes. The act provides for the payment of any travelling expenses necessarily incurred in, and about the business of city corporations, only. Our representatives in the Local Legislature are sufficiently near and quite as capable of discussing municipal reforms as are members of councils, whose term of office is indefinite and who have no time to devote to the exhaustive investigation necessary before proposed changes in our Municipal system can be properly understood.

They are Even Now.

The Scotchman in Edinburgh — "We hae Wei-hai-wei."

The Scotchman in New York — "An' we hae Hawaii, we hae."

The Ward System.

The opinion in favor of doing away with the ward system in towns and cities, and reducing the number of councillors, is increasing. Wherever the question has been submitted to the electors a favorable opinion has been expressed.

This change, while not urged as a panacea for all municipal ills, is regarded as one well calculated to raise the administration of our municipal affairs to a higher level.

Under the present ward system a narrow and local view of his duties is liable to be taken by an alderman. He is constantly being reminded by the electors of his ward that he is the representative of that ward at the council board and his value as a representative is measured by the amount of money he can have expended in his ward, and the other advantages he can secure for his constituents. This influence constantly operating upon the alderman, it is contended, narrows his views of public duty. The tendency of the ward system is to create parties in the council. There is a natural tendency under the ward system for the representatives to combine in order to secure the largest share of the civic expenditure for their particular locality. In other words it encourages what is known as log-rolling in the council.

With the whole city to select from it is believed that a better class of citizens would be available and that better men could be induced to offer themselves for election. Men elected by the electors of the whole city would be more likely to look at questions coming up for consideration from the standpoint of the interests of the whole city and not a particular part of it.

That our present municipal system is somewhat clumsy, extravagant, and in some respects unsatisfactory, is generally admitted. The doing away with the ward system and reducing the number of aldermen is worthy of consideration. — *Windsor Record*.

Municipal Affairs for September.

Although *Municipal Affairs* has been in existence but a brief time it has more than justified its creation by the scientific, as well as the extremely practical value of its articles. The last number opens with a valuable history and analytical study of "Municipal Corporations in Our Colonial period," by Dr. John A. Fairlie. "Direct Employment of Labor vs. the Contract System" is discussed by J. W. Martin, of the Fabian Society of London, particular attention being paid to the success of the Works Department of the London County Council. Leonard Tuttle, in "Local Option in Taxation," maintains that cities and counties should be permitted to abolish the personal property tax, and raise their revenues by whatever taxes they see fit to adopt. The arguments favoring such a plan are

forcibly presented. Prof. J. W. Jenks favors the establishment of "A State Municipal Board," and thoroughly considers every possible phase of administrative vs. legislative supervision of cities. Every person interested in municipal home rule will find this article extremely interesting. The experience of the vacation schools in New York is given by Dr. William Howe Tolman, who originated the movement some years ago. Following this is a symposium upon "Women's Work on City Problems." Everyone interested in securing better municipal conditions will find here abundant suggestions for practical work. The aim, to show what has been accomplished by women and the means of attaining these results, has been thoroughly realized.

An Assessment Appeal.

An appeal before His Honor Judge Hughes from the decision of the Court of Revision of Aylmer took place in that town recently. The assessor had without calling for a statement fixed a valuation on the stock of the firm of Finch & Co. at \$8,000, which the Court of Revision reduced to \$6,000. The question involved was as to the exemptions on the value, because of the amount remaining unpaid on the original purchase thereof. It appeared that the assessor had valued the stock without calling upon the firm for a written statement prescribed by the Assessment Act, but by comparison with other merchant's stocks in the town, which were visibly smaller. It appeared the firm had purchased the original stock from an assignee of an insolvent, but had paid nothing in cash, and had given notes payable by instalments for the whole stock; they had purchased other goods since upon which remained a considerable indebtedness.

The Judge held that the stock of other merchants in town were probably paid for; that some of them were well known to possess capital invested in their business, in which case no deductions such as were applicable to this case could be made. This view being understood, and that because the stock over and above what was due on original purchase thereof amounted to only \$3,600, the assessment was reduced to \$3,500, and no costs were allowed.

A Bad Compliment.

A poor woman who had a son of whom she was very proud, unintentionally paid him a very bad compliment. Speaking of the boy to the priest, she said: "There isn't in the barony, yer riverence, a cleverer lad nor Tom. Look at him, yer riverence," pointing to two small chairs in the cabin. "He made thim out of his own head, and faix he has enough of wood left to make me a big arm chair." — *London Spectator*.

In a French town the authorities have posted a notice stating that "every cyclist meeting a policeman is requested to stop and allow him to ascertain the speed he is riding at."